

from Amazing Grays: A Woman's Guide to Making the Next 50 the BEST 50 (*Regardless of your hair color!*) Maggie Rose Crane

Awakening to a Fresh Perspective

I am a Boomer, proud to be part of a movement of amazing women who are redefining what it means to age well.

I am not a celebrity. I cook my own meals, drive my own car, choose my own clothes and do my own hair and makeup. I have an ex (two, to be exact), a (grown-up) blended family and a hubby. Probably like many of you.

The dirt really hit the fan when I decided to allow my hair to go silver. Life without hair dye brought me face to face with many of my fears, anxieties and limiting beliefs about entering my... (*gulp*) senior years.

Like so many women who have spent a lifetime marinating in our culture of youth and beauty and its negative stereotypes about aging, I secretly feared that I would eventually become a feeble, lonely, prune-faced, housebound, forgetful, sexless old woman with her boobs in her lap... and I was nothing less than *horrified* at the prospect. Having put too much value on the external aspects of my life, my physical appearance, my career and my *stuff*, I wondered who would I be as these things began to change.

I decided that rather than succumb to my limiting beliefs and fears about aging, I would challenge them by holding them up to the light of day. Where did they come from? Were they *true*? How could I change them? How freeing it was to eventually see that so much of what dampened my joy were really just the noisy voices of my past programming. It was also humbling to see how hard they were to silence. And so I dug in.

Little by little, I peeled away the leftovers of a life gone by. Like Michelangelo “releasing” a sculpture from a block of stone by chipping away the excess, so I approached my life – chipping away the old beliefs and fears that disguised my true essence. In the process, my own masterpiece began to emerge.

As I worked through my fears, it suddenly dawned on me – this was not the end of my life, but a *new beginning!* This was an opportunity to view life from a new vantage point and embrace a fresh perspective. It was a chance to reclaim the authentic me and design the life I want to live from here on out. By keeping the aspects of myself and my life that reflect *who I really am*, and changing, transforming or dropping those that don't, I could create the identity and life that I chose.

And thus I joined the ranks of the Amazing Grays, women of a certain age who understand that we are in charge of our experience of the aging process - not society, not the media and certainly not our programming about what it means to "get old". Rather than dread the coming years, we have decided to live our lives full out and unencumbered by our past.

This is a time in our lives when we get to be who we were meant to be. Who we choose to be. Sure, our bodies look a little worse for wear, but consider what we've been through! Adolescence, injury, childbirth, parenthood, loss, passion, heartbreak, wild sex, accidents, marriage and more (not in any particular order). Consider yourself lucky for having made it this far – and for living at a time when we have so many advantages in health, technology and education that allow us to be proactive in the aging process.

For you, it may not be the color of your hair that starts this internal process. It could be the changes in your body and face, the wrinkles and rolls that get harder to cover and ignore. It might be the changing landscape of your home and family as children move away (or back in) and have children of their own. Or you might find yourself looking at life in a new light as your career either comes to a close or becomes unfulfilling. For most of us, it's a sweet, scary, anxious and exciting time of life!

As I felt my way through the sea of emotions that arose on my own journey, I spoke with many women who were going through similar challenges. Most were grateful to be able to talk about what they were experiencing and breathed a huge sigh of relief knowing that they were not alone.

Despite our commonality, coming to terms with one's aging is a highly personal process that requires each of us to tap into our inner wisdom, trust our own experience, and draw our own conclusions. There are many opportunities throughout this book for you to write down your thoughts, experience or understandings. Writing has a way of prodding the unconscious to release the gifts it's been keeping safe for you. You might be surprised by what you uncover.

As you read this book, please remember that I have not "arrived." While I've made peace with much of my experience, I have yet to achieve total acceptance of the changes happening to my body (without my consent!). Sometimes, I am genuinely startled to see a silver haired woman reflected in my mirror. *Who is that? This wasn't supposed to happen!*

How our bodies age is determined by so many variables – genetics, sun damage, hormones, diet, smoking, exercise, attitude and more. We can't do anything about our heritage or how we treated our bodies in the past. But we can accept where we are now, and dip into the deep well of available knowledge on how to take better care of ourselves going forward. We can spend less time on negative thoughts about how we don't measure up and choose to enjoy our lives (and ourselves!) more. We can embrace the truth that we are so much more than our bodies.

How our attitudes age is up to us. We each have the ability to challenge the perceptions, limiting beliefs and behaviors that hold us back, and make choices that help us live a joyful, more inspired life.

By taking the focus off our packaging and redirecting it to our essence, we can see an aging body with a new clarity. While this body helps me function in the world, it certainly is not the essence of *who I am*.

In an effort to provide you with options (because we all have to find our own *answers*), this book explores the social, physical, psychological and spiritual perspectives on aging in the midst of our youth-obsessed culture. I read piles of books and articles, conferred with healthcare professionals and challenged the status quo. I learned about how our midlife hormones are there to rewire our brains, expand our worldview and help us give birth to our inner wise-

woman. I experienced precious moments of grace, where I was offered the opportunity to step out of old identities, reawaken slumbering dreams, set clear boundaries, ask for what I wanted and challenge myself to try new things. Through it all, I realized it's not *that* we age that really matters – it's *how* we age.

This is not an anti-aging book. It's about living joyously – accepting and celebrating what we have been given, and not wasting our time and energy trying to hang on to the past. It's about embracing a fresh start and creating the life you've always wanted, one that's in alignment with your deepest values and intentions and reflects the woman you've become.

Are you ready to join the ranks of Amazing Grays? No matter where you are on the continuum of life, you will find much to relate to in these pages (*regardless* of your hair color). Get ready to expose and discard your fears about growing older. Learn to challenge the behaviors that are keeping you stuck in a mindset of fear and limitation. Get ready to reawaken slumbering dreams and passions and try something new.

One variable we have absolute control over is our perspective. Therein lies our ability to age consciously and joyously.

We must alter our perspective, seeing things from a new place and therefore in a new way. Perspective creates perception, perception creates belief, belief creates behavior, behavior creates experience, and experience creates reality. If we want to change our reality, we need to change our perspective. We need to see things in a New Way.

Neale Donald Walsch

How do you see things?

Is your life over – or did you save the best for last?

~

If you wish to cite or reprint this article you are welcome to do so provided you include the following acknowledgement: Excerpt from **AMAZING GRAYS - A Woman's Guide to Making the Next 50 the BEST 50*** (*Regardless of your hair color!*) by Maggie Rose Crane, FTA Press, 2008; www.maggiecrane.com